

In the claims:

1. (currently amended) ~~Covering (2) for arranging on a ground surface (1), in particular a floor, comprising:~~

at least two parallel form-retaining covering parts (4) which are mutually connected along adjacent side edges (5,6) and which have a backing side (13) directed toward the ground surface (1) and a visual side (14) remote therefrom, wherein the two side edges (5,6) take a step-like form with an inner (5i,6i) and an outer (5e,6e) edge segment such that the first covering part (4) has a protruding backing side (13) and the second covering part (4) has an overhanging visual side (14),

which covering parts (4) are provided with co-acting coupling elements (9,10) placed along the side edges (5,6), wherein the coupling element (9) of the first covering part (4) is a groove which is formed in the protruding backing side (13) and at least open to the visual side (14), and the coupling element (10) of the second covering part (4) forms a tongue extending from the overhanging visual side (14) at least to the ground surface (1), which groove (9) and tongue (10) each have an at least partly curved profile, and wherein the groove (9) undercuts the inner edge segment (5i) of the first covering part (4) and the tongue (10) protrudes beyond the outer edge segment (6e) of the second covering part (4),

wherein the undercut (21) of the groove (9) and the part (22) of the tongue (10) protruding beyond the edge (6e) each have an at least partly chamfered profile, and wherein the outer edge segment (5e) of the first covering part (4) and the inner edge segment (6i) of the second covering part (4) define a gap (24) in the mutually connected position of the covering parts (4),

wherein each covering part (4) is constructed from a relatively thick base layer (15) forming the backing side and, connected thereto, a top layer (16) forming the visual side (14), and the coupling elements (9,10,11,12) are formed in the base layer (15), ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the groove (9) and the tongue (10) each form profiles complementary to each other whereby a form-fitting connection between the covering parts (4) can be realized.

2. (currently amended) Covering (2)—as claimed in claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the inner edge segment (5i)—of the first covering part (4)—and the outer edge segment (6e)—of the second covering part (4)—run substantially transversely of the visual side (14)—of the relevant covering part (4).

3. (currently amended) Covering (2)—as claimed in claim 1—~~or 2~~, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the at least partly curved profile forms a segment of a circle.

4. (currently amended) Covering (2)—as claimed in ~~any of the foregoing~~ claims 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein a chamfered surface (23)—is defined between the visual side (14)—and the side edge (5,6)—of at least one of the covering parts (4).

5. (currently amended) Covering (2)—as claimed in ~~any of the foregoing~~ claims 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein each covering part (4)—has two parallel step-like side edges (5,6), the one (5)—of which is embodied with the protruding backing side (13)—with groove (9), and the other (6)—with the overhanging visual side (14)—with tongue (10).

6. (currently amended) Covering (2)—as claimed in claim 5, ~~characterized in that~~wherein each covering part (4)—has two mutually parallel end edges (7,8)—which enclose an angle with the side edges (5,6)—and which are provided with secondary coupling elements (11,12).

7. (currently amended) Covering (2)—as claimed in claim 6, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the two end edges (7,8)—also take a step-like form such that the one covering part (4)—has a protruding backing side (13)—and the other covering part (4)—has an overhanging visual side (14), the secondary coupling element (11)—of the one covering part (4)—is a recess formed on the top of the protruding backing side (13), and the secondary coupling element (12)—of the other covering part (4)—is a protrusion formed under the overhanging visual side (14).

8. (currently amended) Covering (2) as claimed in ~~any of the foregoing~~ claims 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the top layer (16) is formed from a high-grade type of wood, and has a thickness of at least 1 mm, preferably at least 2.5 mm and most preferably in the order of 4 mm.

9. (currently amended) Covering part (4) for use in a covering (2) as claimed in claims 1 and 5, said covering part (4) having a backing side (13) to be directed toward a ground surface (1) and a visual side (14) remote therefrom, said covering part (4) further having two parallel side edges (5,6) which each take a step-like form with an inner (5i,6i) and an outer (5o,6o) edge segment such that the covering part (4) has a protruding backing side (13) along a first one (5) of the side edges (5,6) and an overhanging visual side (14) along the other, second side edge (6),

said covering part (4) being provided with co-acting coupling elements (9,10) placed along the respective side edges (5,6), wherein the coupling element (9) along the first side edge (5) is a groove which is formed in the protruding backing side (13) and at least open to the visual side (14), and the coupling element (10) along the second side edge (6) forms a tongue extending from the overhanging visual side (14) at least to the ground surface (1), which groove (9) and tongue (10) each have an at least partly curved profile, and wherein the groove (9) undercuts the inner edge segment (5i) of the first side edge (5) and the tongue (10) protrudes beyond the outer edge segment (6o) of the second side edge (6), and said covering part (4) being constructed from a relatively thick base layer (15) forming the backing side and, connected thereto, a top layer (16) forming the visual side (14), the coupling elements (9,10,11,12) being formed in the base layer (15), wherein the undercut (21) of the groove (9) and the part (22) of the tongue (10) protruding beyond the edge (6o) each have an at least partly chamfered profile, and wherein the outer edge segment (5o) of the first side edge (5) and the inner edge segment (6i) of the second side edge (6) are dimensioned such as to define a gap (24) in the mutually connected position of two of these covering parts (4),

~~characterized in that~~ wherein the groove (9) and the tongue (10) each form profiles complementary to each other whereby a form-fitting connection between two of these covering parts (4) can be realized.

10. (currently amended) Covering part (4)—as claimed in claim 9, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the top layer (16) is formed from a high-quality material, in particular a high-grade type of wood, and has a thickness of at least 1 mm, preferably at least 2.5 mm and most preferably in the order of 4 mm.

11. (currently amended) Method for mutually connecting at least two covering parts (4)—as claimed in claim 9—~~or 10~~, at least one (4)—of which is already arranged on a ground surface (1), comprising the steps of:

a) orienting a side edge (6)—of the second covering part (4)—for connecting to the first, already arranged covering part (4)—substantially parallel to a free side edge (5)—of the first covering part (4),

b) moving the second covering part (4)—at a distance above the ground surface (1)—to the side edge (5)—of the first covering part (4),

c) rotating the second covering part (4)—about an axis parallel to the side edge (6)—thereof,

d) placing the tongue (10)—of the second covering part (4)—at an angle into the groove (9)—of the first covering part (4), and

e) with forming of the connection, lowering the second covering part (4)—onto the ground surface (1)—by rotating it in the opposite direction.

12. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 11, ~~characterized in that~~wherein after connection thereof the second covering part (4)—is displaced parallel to the side edge (5,6)—relative to the first covering part (4).

13. (currently amended) Method as claimed in claim 11—~~or 12~~, ~~characterized in that~~wherein after the first and second covering parts (4)—have been mutually connected a third covering part (4)—is arranged in line with the second covering part (4), which third covering part (4)—is attached by connecting a side edge (6)—thereof to the first covering part (4), and an end edge (8)—thereof to the second covering part (4).

14. (new) Covering for arranging on a ground surface, in particular a floor, comprising:

at least two parallel form-retaining covering parts which are mutually connected along adjacent side edges and which have a backing side directed toward the ground surface and a visual side remote therefrom, wherein the two side edges take a step-like form with an inner and an outer edge segment such that the first covering part has a protruding backing side and the second covering part has an overhanging visual side,

which covering parts are provided with co-acting coupling elements placed along the side edges, wherein the coupling element of the first covering part is a groove which is formed in the protruding backing side and at least open to the visual side, and the coupling element of the second covering part forms a tongue extending from the overhanging visual side at least to the ground surface, which groove and tongue each have an at least partly curved profile, and wherein the groove undercuts the inner edge segment of the first covering part and the tongue protrudes beyond the outer edge segment of the second covering part,

wherein the undercut of the groove and the part of the tongue protruding beyond the edge each have an at least partly chamfered profile.

15. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein the inner edge segment of the first covering part and the outer edge segment of the second covering part run substantially transversely of the visual side of the relevant covering part.

16. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein the groove and the tongue each form profiles complementary to at least one of the associated edge segments whereby a form-fitting connection between the covering parts can be realized.

17. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein the at least partly curved profile forms a segment of a circle.

18. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein the other edge segments define a gap in the mutually connected position of the covering parts.

19. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein a chamfered surface is defined between the visual side and the side edge of at least one of the covering parts.

20. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein each covering part has two parallel step-like side edges, the one of which is embodied with the protruding backing side with groove, and the other with the overhanging visual side with tongue.

21. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 20, wherein each covering part has two mutually parallel end edges, which enclose an angle with the side edges, and which are provided with secondary coupling elements.

22. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 21, wherein the two end edges also take a step-like form such that the one covering part has a protruding backing side and the other covering part has an overhanging visual side, the secondary coupling element of the one covering part is a recess formed on the top of the protruding backing side, and the secondary coupling element of the other covering part is a protrusion formed under the overhanging visual side.

23. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 14, wherein each covering part is constructed from a relatively thick base layer forming the backing side and, connected thereto, a top layer forming the visual side, and the coupling elements, are formed in the base layer, wherein the top layer is formed from a high-quality material, in particular a high-grade type of wood.

24. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 23, wherein the top layer has a thickness of at least 1 mm, preferably at least 2.5 mm and most preferably in the order of 4 mm.

25. (new) Covering part for use in a covering as claimed in claim 14, said covering part having a backing side to be directed toward a ground surface and a visual side remote therefrom, said covering part further having two parallel side edges which each take a step-like form with an inner and an outer edge segment such that the covering part has a protruding backing side along a first one of the side edges and an overhanging visual side along the other, second side edge,

said covering part being provided with co-acting coupling elements placed along the respective side edges, wherein the coupling element along the first side edge is a groove which is formed in the protruding backing side and at least open to the visual side, and the coupling element along the second side edge forms a tongue extending from the overhanging visual side at least to the ground surface, which groove and tongue each have an at least partly curved profile, and wherein the groove undercuts the inner edge segment of the first side edge and the tongue protrudes beyond the outer edge segment of the second side edge,

wherein the undercut of the groove and the part of the tongue protruding beyond the edge each have an at least partly chamfered profile.

26. (new) Covering for arranging on a ground surface, in particular a floor, comprising:

at least two parallel form-retaining covering parts which are mutually connected along adjacent side edges and which have a backing side directed toward the ground surface and a visual side remote therefrom, wherein the two side edges take a step-like form with an inner and an outer edge segment such that the first covering part has a protruding backing side and the second covering part has an overhanging visual side,

which covering parts are provided with co-acting coupling elements placed along the side edges, wherein the coupling element of the first covering part is a groove which is formed in the protruding backing side and at least open to the visual side, and the coupling element of the second covering part forms a tongue extending from the overhanging visual side at least to the ground surface, which groove and tongue each have an at least partly curved profile, and wherein the groove undercuts the inner edge segment of the first covering part and the tongue protrudes beyond the outer edge segment of the second covering part, and

wherein the other edge segments define a gap in the mutually connected position of the covering parts.

27. (new) Covering for arranging on a ground surface, in particular a floor, comprising:

at least two parallel form-retaining covering parts which are mutually connected along adjacent side edges and which have a backing side directed toward the ground surface and a visual side remote therefrom, wherein the two side edges take a step-like form with an inner and an outer edge segment such that the first covering part has a protruding backing side and the second covering part has an overhanging visual side,

which covering parts are provided with co-acting coupling elements placed along the side edges, wherein the coupling element of the first covering part is a groove which is formed in the protruding backing side and at least open to the visual side, and the coupling element of the second covering part forms a tongue extending from the overhanging visual side at least to the ground surface, which groove and tongue each have an at least partly curved profile, and wherein the groove undercuts the inner edge segment of the first covering part and the tongue protrudes beyond the outer edge segment of the second covering part, and

wherein each covering part is constructed from a relatively thick base layer forming the backing side and, connected thereto, a top layer forming the visual side, and the coupling elements, are formed in the base layer, wherein the top layer is formed from a high-quality material, in particular a high-grade type of wood.

28. (new) Covering as claimed in claim 27, wherein the top layer has a thickness of at least 1 mm, preferably at least 2.5 mm and most preferably in the order of 4 mm.